

TROTSKY AND THE RED ARMY OF WORKERS AND
PEASANTS FROM 1918 TO 1922

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INTRODUCTION

The Russian Army prior to 1918 was composed primarily of peasants who lacked adequate training in the use of weapons and discipline.

Lenin saw the need for organizing an army to protect the new Bolshevik government and to help further spread Communism throughout the world. Although Lenin gave the decree establishing the new army, Trotsky did the real work of organizing, training, disciplining and indoctrinating the Red Army, for this reason he is often called "the Father of the Russian Army." Although Trotsky admittedly knew little about military affairs, he obtained assistance from his 'military specialists,' who were former tsarist officers. For using these former tsarist officers, Trotsky received open opposition and criticism from the Bolshevik leaders.

This study will analyze the successes and failures that the Red Army incurred along with the methods employed by Trotsky and his 'military specialists' in organizing and training the Red Army of Workers and Peasants (RKKA).

Students in Russian history classes are often taught about the Russian's use of the "scorched earth plan" and how successful it was in stopping Napoleon and later Hitler but the ability and hardships that the Red Army encountered

in its early history is not emphasized.

Studying the history of a revolutionary government's ability to establish an effective army in a time of world crisis, World War I, and during a period of civil war should be of interest to any student curious about how a new and weak government can protect itself from external interventions and internal reaction.

The problem of creating a revolutionary army will be approached topically. The central focus will be on Trotsky and his contributions to the Red Army of Workers and Peasants. Specifically this thesis will examine the military tactics, political control, and the means of obtaining and disciplining soldiers for the Red Army. This study will analyze Trotsky's organizational tactics in the Red Army, how the Bolshevik government erected the Red Army and how the Red Cell was used and its effect on the soldiers.

The limitations of this study will center around my inability to read Russian which causes me to rely more on secondary sources and the fact that primary sources on this topic are relatively scarce in this area.

In scope this paper will cover the military history of the Red Army from 1918 to 1922. The importance of these dates is that in 1918 the Red Army of Workers and Peasants was created; and in 1922 the Red Army had defeated its major domestic and foreign enemies and had assumed its basic organizational structure.

CHAPTER I

THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION OF THE RED ARMY

In the beginning of 1918 the Russians were still engaged in a war with the Germans. The Russian Army, such as it was, was primarily a volunteer army, consisting of a large percentage of peasants, Letts, Chinese, Finns--and, in Siberia, many prisoners of war of the German coalition joined the Red Army.¹ The army was afflicted with a morale problem due to the merciless defeats it suffered at the hands of the Germans. The quality of the army was unsatisfactory, it lacked centralization, discipline and adequately trained soldiers and officers.

Lenin saw the need for a powerful army, not only for the defense of his infant regime but for the purpose of world revolution. On January 28, 1918, Lenin signed the decree that brought into existence the Workers and Peasants Army (RKKA).² The official birthday of the Soviet Army, however, is February 23, 1918³ because it was on that day

¹Michael Berchin and Eliahu Ben-Horin, The Red Army (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1942), pp. 45-46.

²Roman Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and Communist Party (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 38.

³Malcolm Mackintosh, Juggernaut (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 20.

that one unit of the Red Guards was successful in inflicting a check on a German column marching on Petrograd.

Leon Trotsky resigned the post of Foreign Commissar after the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, March 1918. Later Trotsky was made Commissar of War, this appointment was not unanimously approved within the Bolshevik Party, as Trotsky . . . had already made enemies.⁴ Trotsky, a man with little military knowledge, was the prime organizer of the Red Army. He was also given the post of chairman of the Revolutionary War Council.⁵ Trotsky wrote that the Soviets' task was to create an army of workers and small peasants to give it compulsory military training without forcing it into barracks and in doing this to maintain, as far as possible, conditions which shall be in harmony with the working conditions of the laboring population.⁶

Radek related that Trotsky, when he became Commissar of War, had read only a few books on military affairs, Jaures' L'Armee Nouvelle, a large History of War by Schulz, a German Socialist, and Franz Mehring's writings on

⁴Edgar O'Ballance, The Red Army: A Short History (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 39.

⁵Sometimes referred to as the Revolutionary Military Council.

⁶Leon Trotsky, "Creating the Russian Communist Party," Current History Magazine of the New York Times, November, 1919, pp. 310-312.

Frederick the Great.⁷ Trotsky was also familiar, along with Lenin, with the work of Clausewitz, the great Prussian strategist. Undoubtedly, Trotsky had very little theoretical or practical preparations to be Commissar of War; nevertheless, he made an outstanding contribution to the organizing of the Red Army and justly deserves the title of "Father of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants."⁸ Indeed, the building of the Red Army owed more to Trotsky than to any other man.⁹

Trotsky, with Lenin's approval, undertook to remove the destructive elements from the Red Army and to transform it into an efficient professional force. In carrying out this task he met with open opposition from many of his colleagues in the party, including Stalin, Voroshilov and Frunze. Trotsky reminded them that they had to tell the Russian workers and peasants to create self-discipline and strict discipline if they did not want to be under the heel of the German boot.¹⁰ He admonished them that if they did not learn discipline from the Germans they would become a lost nation.

The Party was divided on the role the Red Army would play. One side wanted it to be a truly "revolutionary"

⁷Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 477.

⁸O'Ballance, Red Army, p. 39.

⁹B. H. Liddell Hart, ed., The Red Army (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1956), p. 27.

¹⁰Berchin and Ben-Horin, Red Army, p. 46

army based on ideological tenets while the others wanted it to be a professional army unaffected by ideology.

Those desiring a "revolutionary" army favored:

1. A minimum of centralized control and maximum reliance on local party control for military units, a territorial militia. (That is to say, a territorial militia as opposed to standing professional cadres.)
2. The abolition of rigid discipline, ranks and traditional military virtues and their replacement be a system in which commanders were elected and orders might be questioned.
3. Voluntary recruitment as opposed to compulsory service.
4. Local, rather than central control of Party organizations, and political organs in military units.
5. Revolutionary military doctrine in place of orthodox strategy.¹¹

If the revolutionary military doctrine was adopted the revolutionary army would employ guerrilla tactics and abandon the conventional type of warfare that made use of the trench and the front lines.

Those proponents of a professional army of standing cadres suggested that the control of the military be centralized and operate according to traditional military strategic concepts, strict discipline and hierarchic organization. The Red Army, in its early years, was a compromise of the two views. Although it was gradually becoming an organization of professional cadres, it still retained several characteristics of the revolutionary army

¹¹Kolkowicz, Soviet Military, p. 39.

idea.¹² These will be discussed later.

Trotsky had proposed a plan of development for the military organism he was seeking to build. This plan had two parts; the first segment, the Party had to disregard ideological formulas and create a military force capable of fending off the counterrevolutionaries within and without the Soviet Union. The second part would take effect only after the first one had been successfully accomplished, then the Party would be free to create, at a more leisurely pace, a truly revolutionary army guided by ideological imperatives.

In the early part of 1918, the Red Army was a volunteer army, but this proved to be failure when only 106,000 men enlisted during a two month period. Those men who had managed to escape conscription in the Imperial Army had no desire to change their views and join the Red Army. Although the final coup d'etat that put the Bolsheviks in power was made possible with the help of the peasants, the peasants had no love for the Bolshevik government who requisitioned their produce and gave them nothing in exchange.¹³ So why should they remove their Imperial uniforms or drop their plows to join the Red Army when they neither knew nor cared about the new Bolshevik plan for a strong and well disciplined Red Army? Because of this, on April 22, 1918 the government reintroduced

¹²Ibid.

¹³Hart, Red Army, p. 27.

compulsory military training and a week later a decree was issued abolishing the election of commanders in the armed forces.¹⁴

Trotsky was determined to build the new Red Army on conventional lines, he accepted advice from ex-tsarist officers on military matters, much to the dislike of fellow revolutionaries, who preferred him using the so-called Marxist methods of waging war. On the advice of his 'military specialists', General Vatsetis and General Brusilov, he enlisted the assistance of former Imperial officers to command in the Red Army. The Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, opposed the idea because these officers were brought up with bourgeois ideals were felt by the party members, and in some cases needlessly so, to be suspects for a counterrevolution against the infant government. Trotsky told his opponents that even if it were possible to create an entirely new command in the course of several years by means of systematic work, there would yet be no fundamental reason to forego the help of members of the old command. It does not matter whether these are convinced supporters of the Soviet government or have been obliged by the forces of circumstances to offer their services.¹⁵ At the end of June, 1918, the government introduced conscription which led to the recall to the colors of 22,000 former professional officers and

¹⁴Mackintosh, Juggernaut, p. 21.

¹⁵Trotsky, "Communist Party," p. 311

nearly 130,00 former non-commissioned officers of the old army.¹⁶ According to the Associated Press, "All former non-commissioned officers of the Imperial Army within reach of the Bolshevik authorities in Petrograd were being forcibly mobilized according to advice received in Vladivostok. They desired officers in the Red Army, for which six classes of troops were reportedly called to the colors."¹⁷ General Brusilov issued a written appeal to all former Russian army officers, whenever located, to join in a defense of the integrity of national Russia against any foreign effort to dismember the country.¹⁸ He was referring to the Polish threat.

In order to ensure the loyalty of these professional officers to whom the name 'military specialists' was given, the government created the Institute of Political Commissars. The method was to attach a reliable Communist commissar to every staff and unit in the field with the task of ensuring the former officers did not desert or sabotage the army by issuing counterrevolutionary orders. The political commissars were ordered not to interfere in operational and military matters but they had to countersign all orders in order for them to be valid. Hostility toward the former officers was one of the troublesome

¹⁶Mackintosh, Juggernaut, p. 21.

¹⁷"Made Officers by Force," New York Times, January 6, 1919, p. 3.

¹⁸"Wrangel Wipes Out Red Calvary Corps," New York Times, July 7, 1920, p. 17.

features during the early years of the Red Army. The 'military specialists' underwent intimidation and ridicule from some commissars, some specialists were given to desertion by such tactics. The commissars fumed at Trotsky for employing the aid of the former officers.

Trotsky employed another method of checking to make sure the former officers did not desert or plan counter-revolutions, he held their families captive. General and staff officers in the old Russian Army were compelled to serve the Bolsheviki by holding their families as hostages for the officers' conduct. Cases occurred of officers' families being placed under close arrest, the women being treated as badly as the men.¹⁹ In case an officer deserted, his family was shot and he was naturally killed if he was apprehended. This method was successful in discouraging many would be deserters.

Along with the drafting of former officers into the Red Army the services of medical and veterinary officers were secured. Approximately 2,500 medical and veterinary officers were in the Red Army in 1918 and by April 1, 1919 the figure increased to 4,395.²⁰

The Bolsheviki placed advertisements in German medical journals offering positions to German physicians and surgeons in the Red Army. Attractive pay, 5,000 marks

¹⁹"Red Army Made Strong by Coerced Officers," New York Times, February 5, 1919, p. 1.

²⁰D. Pedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 51.

and the right of securing homesteads were promised them. Medical men were urged to enlist with volunteer troop units organized to fight for Bolshevism.²¹

The former non-commissioned officers were important to the Red Army because it did not have a chance to train its own officers corps so it had to depend on the aid of the former NCO's. By 1918, there were 128,169 former non-commissioned officers of the old army enrolled in the Red Army, as well as 9,713 of the lower medical and veterinary personnel.²² Trotsky's order of August 3, 1918, called the former NCO's to occupy command positions in the Red Army. Every former NCO in the ranks of the Red Army who volunteered, as well as those drafted into it, was given the position and privileges of a platoon commander, i.e., of a subaltern officer.²³ This move was one that had a psychological effect on the NCO and served the Red Army by further securing their support.

The peasants in the Red Army were not forgotten because Trotsky, as well as the Party, realized that the peasants comprised a large percentage of the army and the morale of this segment of the population was very low and the desertion rate increasing. This was countered by forming Red Cells; these cells consisted of between

²¹"Offer to German Surgeons," New York Times, September 4, 1919, p. 17.

²²White, Red Army, p. 51.

²³Ibid., p. 52.

fifteen to thirty trusted Party members in as many units as possible, whose task was to boost sagging morale and to breathe life and loyalty to the Bolshevik Party into the men.²⁴ This system proved to be quite effective.

The Soviet Government's desire to communize the army took another form other than that of the Red Cells. Army barracks were transformed into schools for indoctrination on communism. Political commissars (policons) and party committees in the units were placed in charge of the methodical dissemination of Communist propoganda in the barracks.²⁵ This form of propoganda showed immediate results. Although there are no exact figures, it is safe to assume that there was a large increase in Party membership in the Red Army during this period. It would be wrong to assert that all of the members of the Red Army were true Communists. Some joined to gain advantages and privileges that would otherwise be denied them if they were not members of the party and some did not join the Party at all.

The armed forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consisted of the Red Army proper (infantry, cavalry, artillery, tank units, engineers, etc.) air and naval forces, units for coastal defense, border units and military units.²⁶ Under Trotsky's watchful assistance

²⁴O'Ballance, Red Army, p. 41.

²⁵Berchin and Ben-Horin, Red Army, p. 54.

²⁶Ibid., p. 56.

the Red Army began forming. Army units were formed almost everywhere, often using old army units as their core.²⁷

In reorganizing the foot soldiers the Bolshevik leaders took care to avoid using the word infantry. These troops were formed into 'rifle brigades' and rifle divisions' using the word strelkovy, deriving from strelok 'riflemen', which could be translated as sharpshooter. The term infantry (pychota) was employed by the Soviets only as the general designation of the arm, as distinct from artillery and cavalry, etc.²⁸

Trotsky abolished the expressions 'officer' and 'other rank', and in fact all distinguishing ranks and insignias were abrogated. In theory all were equal now, addressing each other as 'Comrade'.²⁹

In the cavalry, the former NCO's took over much more important positions than in the other arms. The commands in the cavalry were predominantly occupied by the former NCO's over or even privates of the old army. The Red cavalry was recruited largely from volunteers, and included a large proportion of the more active and warlike elements of the Red forces.³⁰

The practice of merely giving a soldier a gun without

²⁷Michel Garder, A History of the Soviet Army (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 35.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹O'Ballance, Red Army, p. 40.

³⁰White, Red Army, p. 55.

training was abandoned by the Red Army. Trotsky wrote that universal training is designed to equip the individual soldier and also the whole unit with greater familiarity in all methods of manoeuvring, shooting, and military practices.³¹

The Red Army inherited from the old regime buildings, material, organized bodies of cadets with their instructing personnel.³² With the facilities the Red Army received from the old regime, they began to train their cadets--who would eventually replace the officers of the old army and the NCO's thus putting the second part of Trotsky's plan into effect.

The state of affairs which existed in the old army schools after the revolution and during the Red Guard period continued until the end of 1918. The Command Courses were in practice self-governing bodies, with Soviets and committees of cadets exercising authority over the internal discipline of their respective schools.³³ The primary objective during this period was placed on discipline.

The Soviet Government devised a plan which provided for three types of military educational institutions. The schools of the lower type (First Step) were to be preceded

³¹Trotsky, "Communist Party," p. 311.

³²White, Red Army, p. 56. citing D. A. Petrovskii, Voennals shkola v gody Revoluitii, Moscow, 1924.

³³Ibid.

by the middle type schools (Second Step) and the education was to be completed at the Third Step or military colleges, where the education of the commanders of the Red Army was to receive the final touches.³⁴

The First Step schools had for their end a complete practical training for the lowest officer posts (platoon commander), as well as a practical acquaintanceship with the duties of the next command (company commander). It was planned that regardless of the arm in which the young cadet was to serve upon graduation, he was supposed to acquire a general understanding 'about war and the forces working in it.' The First Step schools were planned to train officers for one arm of the service only. Some were thus designated to educate infantry officers, other cavalry, and still other artillery.

The Second Step schools were to provide the means of perfecting their students in all phases of military science necessary for the efficient direction of detachments comprising the three arms--infantry, cavalry and artillery--as well as to enable them to direct the operations of such detachments in practice.

The Third Step schools--Akademii or Military Colleges, such as the War College, the Artillery College, the Engineers' College, etc.--were to prepare highly trained specialists in their respective fields of military science and art.³⁵

The Command Courses continued to multiply and existed until two years after the Civil War. During the Civil War, (1918-1920), 39,914 cadets graduated from Command Courses.³⁶

In June 1920, there came into existence a higher type of Command Courses. These new courses required twelve

³⁴White, Red Army, p. 58

³⁵White, Red Army, p. 58, citing Petrovskii, Voennals shkola v gody Revoluitii, Moscow, 1924, p. 26.

³⁶White, Red Army, p. 58, citing Grazhdanskaia Voina, 1918-1921, II, p. 96. This figure includes 1897 graduates of the so-called "higher" (vysshie) schools.

months of training. Some of these schools were reorganized into normal military schools as provided by the plan.³⁷

Most of the cadets entering the military schools during the Civil War period did so without any party affiliations; but by the time they had completed their training they had become members of the Communist Party, as a result of Trotsky's thorough indoctrination technic.

The instructors in the military schools were mostly old tsarist military instructors, they failed to relate to the cadets the type of warfare being used by those fighting in the Civil War, instead of trying to relate the classroom warfare methods with those strategies actually in use on the battlefield. D. Petrovskii, Director of Military Education of the Red Army, admits that the Red commanders promoted during the Civil War were for all practical purposes merely well-trained private soldiers with a well-developed sense of duty.³⁸

The commissars of the courses were a very important factor in the functioning of the schools. They had a threefold duty: to serve as a check upon the anti-Bolshevik elements among the instructors and cadets, to guide the Red element, and to provide the impulse and the enthusiasm for the day-by-day life of the courses.³⁹

³⁷White, Red Army, p. 59, citing Petrovskii, Voennals shkola, p. 18.

³⁸White, Red Army, p. 59, citing Petrovskii, Voennals shkola, p. 58.

³⁹White, Red Army, p. 59, citing Petrovskii, Voennals shkola, p. 12.

During the Civil War both sides made use of armoured cars, homemade and otherwise, tanks were rarely used as were airplanes. No new revolutionary form of warfare was evolved and perfected.

The Soviet Government's power of requisitioning helped to provide the army with the necessary materials they needed to continue fighting. Of course, the actual material resources were slight in comparison with the needs of the army, but they were constantly being replenished.⁴⁰ There is no accurate account on exactly how much money was allocated to the Red Army; however, it is safe to assume that a substantial proportion of the Gross National Product was invested into the military during the Civil War.

⁴⁰Irving Howe, ed., The Basic Writings of Trotsky (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 112.

CHAPTER II

TROTSKY AND THE TRAIN

The train was Trotsky's mobile headquarters, it served several functions--military, political and social. The train became a legend during the Civil War. With the aid of the train Trotsky turned up whenever the situation on the front appeared critical. Trotsky referred to the train as that vital shoveful of coal that keeps a dying fire alive.⁴¹ It carried a printing press and signalling equipment which included a radio transmitter for direct contact with Moscow; a small number of hand-picked officers capable of organizing new formations on the spot or taking over from commanders who had proved unequal to their task. The train also carried tobacco, boots, motor-cars and various comforts for the troops.⁴²

Trotsky did not actively participate in the battles occurring during the period of 1918 to 1922, but he along with his assistants helped plan the military strategy of the war. Trotsky helped to boost the sometimes sagging morale of the Red soldiers by his appearance on the battlefield. Often Trotsky was called to the battlefield when a

⁴¹Hart, Red Army, p. 43.

⁴²Ibid.

general or commander deserted his post. Trotsky was lavish in praise for those who distinguished themselves by courage and talent but dealt implacably with those who failed in their duties. On one occasion Trotsky brought before a court martial the commander and the commissar of a regiment, who at the height of the battle had taken themselves and their men away from the front line. Trotsky commented on the event. "The soldiers of the Red Army are neither cowards nor scoundrels." He felt that it was their duty to fight for the freedom of the working class.⁴³ If they failed in this their fight, commanders and commissars were equally guilty. Trotsky issued a warning: if any detachment retreats without orders, the first to be shot will be the commissar and next the commander. Cowards, scoundrels and traitors would not escape the bullet--for this Trotsky vouched before the whole Red Army.⁴⁴

Trotsky had many conflicts with part leaders on some of the methods he employed during the Civil War period. One of the most famous occurred at the town of Tsaritsin (now Volgograd) when Stalin, who had been sent to Tsaritsin as senior political commissar ordered the removal of the former Tsarist officers serving in the Red Army and replaced them with Communists. Trotsky, incensed at this challenge to his authority, demanded and obtained from

⁴³Deutscher, Prophet Armed, p. 420.

⁴⁴Deutscher, Prophet Armed, p. 421, citing Trotsky, Kak Vooruzhalas Revolutsia, Moscow, 1923-1925, I, p. 235.

Lenin the transfer of Stalin to the Ukraine.⁴⁵ This was only one out of a series of events that showed the hostility between Stalin and Trotsky. Hostility also existed between Trotsky and the Politiburo and some friction occurred between Trotsky and Lenin.

During the period of 1918 to 1922 while the Red Army was engaged in a Civil War as well as a war with Poland, the train served as Trotsky's headquarters. From this legendary office on wheels came the orders which enabled the Red Army to defeat the White Army and the Poles. It was aboard the train that Trotsky made the decision to neglect the Crimea and concentrate his forces on the recovery of the Donets basin, hot-beds of a counterrevolution in the rich region of the Don and the Kuban as well as the rest of the Caucasus. For this decision Trotsky was severely criticized by Soviet military writers and Stalin. Trotsky was determined not to commit the same mistake as his adversaries in the summer of 1919 by dispersing his forces in a manoeuvre of too great a scope.⁴⁶ Trotsky issued commands that helped to win for the Bolsheviks land formerly possessed by the White forces, as in the case of the passes over the Ural Mountains which led to a general White retreat into Siberia.⁴⁷ He also issued commands that had a direct effect on the soldiers

⁴⁵Hart, Red Army, p. 37.

⁴⁶Garder, Soviet Army, p. 44.

⁴⁷Hart, Red Army, p. 41.

of the Red Army. Whenever a deserter failed to return to his unit within twenty days his family was held responsible and their property was seized.⁴⁸ Trotsky asserted a strategy in Russia known as the global strategy "which was that, not the tool of a policy of force but, the essential mainstay of a policy."⁴⁹ In keeping with this policy Trotsky ordered that with every Red Army unit in action a police cordon follow whose task was to shoot down any man trying to slip away. These techniques Trotsky admits were not the ones he would have preferred using but he said he was compelled to employ them to insure a Bolshevik victory. Trotsky was not always issuing orders that would punish, he asked that the government establish medals for bravery⁵⁰ to give those soldiers who had done meritorious work.

Trotsky made several trips to the front to see the men and find out about their needs. Aboard the train Trotsky had a direct wire to Moscow where he could send his messages for immediate supply needs. After visiting the front and other battle areas he would hold a conference in the staff car or the dining car, inviting as many representatives as possible, including those from the lower commanding force and from the ranks, as well as from the local party organizations, the Soviets' administration and the trade unions. Trotsky claimed by having so many

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁹Gardner, Soviet Army, p. 159.

⁵⁰Deutscher, Prophet Armed, p. 421.

representatives he got a picture of the situation that was neither false nor highly colored.⁵¹ These conferences always showed some practical results. Trotsky once commented that no matter how poor the organs of the local administration might have been, they always managed to cut down some of their own needs to contribute something to the army.

Trotsky was able to let people in the towns who had no link with the outside world know what was occurring in their country as well as the world. This was accomplished by having telegraphic reports published in the train newspaper and given out as the train went through hamlets. The train had a wireless aerial over a particular car in the train, so that they could receive radio messages from the Eiffel Tower, from Nauen, and from other stations, thirteen in all, with Moscow the foremost.⁵² A stock of telephone apparatus and wires was kept aboard the train which were given out to the regiments and divisions that were previously cut off from the rest of the world.

Although the Red Army's supplies were limited and at some points non-existent, the train carried tobacco, boots, motor-cars, leather jackets, medicaments, machine guns, field glasses, maps, watches and all sort of gifts for the fighting men of the Red Army. Along with these supplies, the train carried a ray of hope for soldiers

⁵¹Howe, Writings of Trotsky, p. 113.

⁵²Ibid., p. 115.

who had lost all hope. The mere presence of the train boosted the soldiers' morale. Commanders would consider the train's effect on the men the same way it would be if they were told that a division of reserves was coming.⁵³

Part of the train was a huge garage holding several automobiles and a gasoline tank. This enabled Trotsky and his advisors to travel away from the railroad lines such as when inspecting and visiting troops. Trotsky always kept a squad of picked sharpshooters and machine gunners, amounting to twenty to thirty men, who occupied the trucks and light cars. A number of hand machine guns were also placed in Trotsky's car in case he ran into a band of Cossacks.

The train was also a fighting institution on wheels. Trotsky often said it was more like an armoured train than a headquarters on wheels. In fact, it was armoured, or at least its engines and machine gun cars were armour covered. All the crew could handle arms. The crew all wore leather uniforms with a large metal badge on the left arm, just below the shoulders. The cars of the train were connected by telephone and by a system of signals. To assure that the men were alert while traveling, Trotsky had frequent alarms sounded, both night and day so the men would be prepared at all times. Armed detachments would be put off the train as 'landing parties.' The appearance of the landing parties behind the firing line gave strength to

⁵³Ibid., p. 117.

the nervous units and acted as a scare tactic against the enemy.

The train was sometimes cut off and shelled or bombed from the air. Just as the train earned respect from the Reds it acquired hatred from its enemies. At the trial of Semyonov, a Social Revolutionary, was told a story on how he took part in the preparation to wreck the train. One one occasion the train was derailed and wrecked, at the station of Gorke but it was soon repaired.

From the end of 1919 Trotsky devoted only a minor part of his attention to military affairs. Trotsky felt that the issue of the Civil War was no longer in doubt.⁵⁴ In the middle of November 1920, some 135,000 soldiers and civilians left Russia for points unknown. The White cause was lost and the Civil War had become history.

The Ninth Party Congress held in 1920, approved the transformation of the Red Army into a militia of the territorial type. The Party enforced a compromise plan under which it retained a cadre army of 560,000 men while the rest of the army gradually was replaced by the territorial militia structure.⁵⁵ This compromise was similar to the one in 1918, when the Red Army of Workers and Peasants was formed. This plan did not satisfy Trotsky because it would not let him carry out his proposed plan for the military organization he was seeking to build.

⁵⁴Deutscher, Prophet Armed, p. 487.

⁵⁵Kolkowicz, Soviet Military, p. 44.

Because the Party members feared a strong military man eventually taking over the government the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) was retained after the Civil War. Trotsky nevertheless accepted the plan because he realized that a cavalry would be maintained with this territorial militia. The success of the Red Army's cavalry in both the Civil War and the Polish War indicated to Trotsky that there was a need for a large contingent of cavalry in any Russian army. The cavalry was essential because twice every year the ground was rendered impassable to vehicles by the spring thaw and rains and the autumn rains.

With the Russo-Polish War beginning in 1920 the talk of a territorial type militia subsided. The Poles were dissatisfied with the appointed eastern border by the Versailles Treaty, September 1919, which laid down a temporary line of demarcation, the Curzon Line. The Poles aspired the frontier of the ancient kingdom of Poland, before the 1772 Partition, which comprised parts of White Russia and the Ukraine.⁵⁶ The Poles, led by a veteran anti-Russian fighter, Joseph Pilsudski, entered into a close political agreement with the Ukrainian anti-Russian forces.⁵⁷ Pilsudski and Wrangel attacked the Reds simultaneously causing the Red Army to divide its forces. The Russians were aroused by a wave of religious, national and

⁵⁶Hart, Red Army, p. 45.

⁵⁷Basil Dmytryshyn, USSR A Concise History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 100.

social sentiment against the Poles when they advanced into the Ukraine. The Bolshevik appeal to all Russians to defend 'Mother Russia' fell on responsive ears. After several battles an armistice was signed October 12, 1920, and later followed by the Treaty of Riga on March 18, 1921 which brought to an end the Russo-Polish War.

One of Trotsky's last tasks during the period of 1918 to 1922 was to put down a revolt of the Kronstadt sailors. The Kronstadt sailors had supported the Bolshevik government as opposed to the Provisional Government. The Kronstadt rebellion was ignited by a series of strikes and demonstrations in Petrograd early in 1921 because of a food shortage and administrative overcentralization.⁵⁸ The Kronstadt sailors, renowned for their revolutionary zeal, sympathized with the strikers and supported their cause. The crew of the battleship Petropavlovsk, adopted a platform, February 28, 1921. "The platform called for immediate re-election of the Soviets by free and secret ballot. It demanded freedom of speech, press and assembly for workers and peasants and for their political parties. It insisted that all political prisoners be released and that the privileged position of the Communist Party and its armed detachments be abolished."⁵⁹ The platform promised the peasants the privilege of doing what they pleased with their land, and advocated the ending of

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 116.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 116-117.

discrimination in food rationing. In March 1921 about 60,000 of the sailors marched on Petrograd against the Bolshevik dictatorship to incite the workers to join them.⁶⁰

Sensing the danger, the authorities sent to Kronstadt Mikhail I. Kalinin, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet. Kalinin was chosen because of his peasant background, it was hoped that because of this factor he would be able to acquire a better rapport with the men than would one of the ex-tsarist officers. Kalinin's attempt was futile.

On March 2, 1921 the defiant sailors set up a Provisional Revolutionary Committee, which they selected from among themselves. The government requested the Committee to surrender peacefully. The Committee feeling that justice was on their side refused and failed to strengthen its position, which was to later prove to be one of the causes for their defeat. The sailors had hoped for a revolt of the workers in the urban areas to materialize thus causing the Red Army to divide its forces but to the misfortune of the sailors it did not.

Government forces directed by Trotsky and led by Tukhachevsky began vigorous preparation for an assault which took place on the eighteenth of March. Tukhachevsky discussed the possibility of using gas shells and balloons during the Kronstadt Rebellion, gas shells and balloons

⁶⁰O'Ballance, Red Army, p. 90.

were actually brought up for the purpose from Petrograd.⁶¹ Trotsky along with a few other Party members outlawed the use of gas warfare on the sailors but had they had to attempt a second time to reduce the rebels, gas would have been used in all probability. Tukhachevsky took his most reliable troops, together with a portion of Red Army cadres and men on the short 'commanders' courses,' which amounted in all to approximately 60,000. The Red soldiers drove the rebels from the outskirts of Petrograd causing the sailors to fall back on their forts and ships at Kronstadt. Tukhachevsky's men along with some 140 delegates to the Tenth Party Congress bombarded the streets of Kronstadt in which the sailor's families lived and then turned their guns on the forts and ships. This all-out assault was resisted by the sailors. Tukhachevsky was suddenly forced to break off action because some of his troops refused to fight, leaving the sailors secure and defiant in their position.

Alarmed, Trotsky came from Moscow to personally direct the assault. Trotsky employed extreme measures to restore the situation. One out of every five men of the Red Army units that refused to fight was shot. Tukhachevsky resumed fighting and by March 18, the Red Army had successfully beaten the mutineers. A ghastly bloodbath ensued resulting in some fifteen thousand sailors, who had surrendered, being massacred without trial.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 106.

Trotsky and the Red Army of Workers and Peasants accomplished many things, the settling of the Civil War, the Russo-Polish War and the Kronstadt revolt were three of the most important of these accomplishments between 1918 to 1922.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

Leon Trotsky is a man that evokes several emotions--admiration, contempt and pity.

Trotsky is deserving of admiration for the manner in which he built the Red Army of Workers and Peasants. When he was given the position of Commissar of War, in 1918, Trotsky knew nothing of organizing, training and disciplining an army other than what he had read. Trotsky had had no practical military experience and because of this factor he had to rely heavily on ex-tsarist officers, which he secured voluntarily or by force. Trotsky realized that the service of these military specialists could not always be trusted, adopted and expended a procedure used by the French, the assigning of political commissars to officers. The French had merely assigned these political commissars to high ranking officials, Trotsky assigned them to all officers.

Contempt can be felt for Trotsky when one reads of the methods in which he used to secure officers and insure their loyalty, such as holding their families hostage. The use of police cordons and the ruthlessness of the armed detachments further adds to the contempt one could feel for Trotsky. Trotsky tried to establish a conventional

army in time of war, World War I and the Civil War, by employing unconventional type means--terror. Trotsky in some of his later writing apologizes for his use of such harsh methods but justifies them by saying they were employed to make the Bolshevik cause victorious.

Pity can be felt for Trotsky because he devoted himself to the Bolshevik cause only to later be undermined, stripped of his party membership, exiled and later assassinated. Trotsky had devoted much of his time and talents to building the Red Army. Trotsky's ruthlessness can not be overlooked or completely justified but a partial justification could be that he was working to the best of his ability to further a cause in which he sincerely believed in, Communism.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Trotsky deserves the title, "Father of the Red Army" because it was through his leadership along with his 'military specialists' that the Russian Army of today first began. Trotsky's use of force in some instances and the abandoning of a volunteer army can be considered harsh and ruthless but one can also see that this method was necessary to insure the success of the young army.

The Red Army of Workers and Peasants was created during a time of war, World War I and forced to prove itself in the Russian Civil War, Russo-Polish War and the Kronstadt Rebellion. The Russian Army did not begin with a modern technology and weapons to assist them or a corps of well organized and disciplined men, but they did commence with a group of men, who believed in the Bolshevik cause and were prepared to die to defend it. Because the army was small, Trotsky abandoned the volunteer army for one in which conscription was utilized to secure the necessary fighting men. The men did not go through a long and extensive training period because the army was created in 1918 and the Civil War began in the same year.

The Red Army under Trotsky's direction showed to the

world the ability of an infant regime to establish an effective military force. The military force was to be used in securing internal peace as well as defending itself from external enemies. The manner in which the Red Army under Trotsky's guidance expelled the threats brought on by the Civil War, the Russo-Polish War and the Kronstadt Rebellion showed the world that Russia was now much more than merely willing to defend her cause but militarily able thanks to the tireless contributions of Leon Trotsky.

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